News Release Senator Pete V. Domenici

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DOMENICI PROMOTES LEGISLATION TO CENTER NATION'S DIRECTED ENERGY WORK AT KIRTLAND AFB

WASHINGTON -- U.S. Senator Pete Domenici today reported that he is promoting legislation to focus the nation's directed energy research and testing in New Mexico and better coordinate and facilitate the development by the Department of Defense of directed energy technologies, systems and weapons.

Domenici has introduced the **Directed Energy Coordination and Consolidation Act** (S.2573), a measure that would work to codify aspects of the *High Energy Laser Master Plan* approved by the Defense Department in March and center activities at Kirtland Air Force Base, Albuquerque.

On Thursday, Domenici also gained committee approval for report language in the FY2001 Defense Appropriations that supports the intent of S.2573.

"While this bill is ultimately in the nation's best interest, it will greatly enhance and accelerate some of the research, development, test and evaluation activities in New Mexico," Domenici said. "It represents a critical first step in the challenge to better leverage the federal government's investment in directed energy technologies by ensuring adequate stability in the industrial base support and promoting educational opportunities in directed energy technologies."

The objective of the legislation, which has been referred to the Senate Armed Services Committee, is as follows:

- Implement the management structure outlined in the *High Energy Laser Master Plan*, the so-called "Etter Report;"
- Relocate the Joint Technology Office (JTO) proposed in the Master Plan from the Pentagon to Kirtland AFB, Albuquerque, by Jan. 1, 2001;
- Incorporate high power microwave decision and resource allocations into the same management structure;
- Ensure that vulnerability of U.S. weapons to enemy directed energy weapons are researched; and,
- Add focus to White Sands Missile Range as the directed energy testing range, including deployment of Los Alamos National Laboratories-developed free electron laser technologies to the range for testing purposes.

The bill authorizes $150 million in defense-wide research and development funding for directed energy technologies, with up to $50 million of those funds available to leverage the directed energy expertise and technologies developed within our DOE laboratories.

S.2573 also authorizes $20 million for the Advanced Tactical Laser program under the Joint Non-Lethal Weapons Program Office in order to take an initial step in addressing some of the industrial base concerns.

"American military dominance relies heavily on our technological superiority. Unlike other instances where the Defense Department is using outsourcing or privatization to reduce costs, the attrition within the research community will require significant renewed investments over a long period of time to rebuild in the future. We are steadily approaching this situation in the field of directed energy," Domenici said. "The lack of emphasis on and investment in revolutionary technologies, such as directed energy, unnecessarily limits the myriad possibilities for effective, surgical defense against a range of missile threats and vast potential for numerous defense applications."

"Now that the High Energy Laser Master Plan has proposed an appropriate management structure, the time is right to take action," Domenici said.

"New Mexico is already a focal point for a lot of the research, development, test and evaluation activities in this field. Kirtland boasts tremendous assets to facilitate this research. White Sands is the premiere directed energy testing range. Co-locating the Joint Technology Office among a critical mass of directed energy activities, both Army and Air Force, is not only sensible, it should also serve to facilitate this work," he said.

Domenici noted that support for Albuquerque as a location is offered by the findings of the 912c Tri-Service Armament Panel Report. This Panel Report was an outgrowth of the July 1999 DoD "Plan to Streamline DoD's Science and Technology, Engineering, and Test and Evaluation Infrastructure."

This Army, Navy and Air Force Senior Steering Group proposed that all Defense Department Directed Energy Science and Technology and Test and Evaluation be consolidated at Kirtland Air Force Base. The Steering Group recommended creation of a Directed Energy Center of Excellence at Kirtland that would be responsible for identifying, advocating, developing, and transitioning directed energy technology to meet all Defense Department requirements.

Implementation of this management structure, regardless of the location of the Joint Technology Office will have no impact on the existing laser programs, such as the

Tactical High Energy Laser (THEL), Airborne Laser (ABL) or Space-based Laser (SBL).

"The objective is to grow all directed energy programs desired by any one of the Services, depending on specific applications pursued," Domenici said.

Earlier this year, Domenici and Congresswoman Heather Wilson committed to working toward consolidating all Defense Department Directed Energy Weapons technology research, development, test and evaluation (RDT&E) programs to form a National Directed Energy Center and a Directed Energy Technology Alliance headquartered at Kirtland Air Force Base in Albuquerque.

The lawmakers have consistently contended that Kirtland is an ideal site for the consolidation effort because Albuquerque already represents a national center for directed energy research and development. The Directed Energy Directorate of Air Force Research Laboratories is located at Kirtland AFB. In addition, the Special Programs Office for the Air Force's Airborne Laser program is headquartered at Kirtland, and last year the Air Force decided to move Space-Based Laser program oversight to the base. Many of the basic technologies for these sophisticated defense systems were first developed by the Air Force Laboratories at Kirtland.

In addition, several of Albuquerque's most successful and fastest-growing private industries service the laser weapons programs of the Air Force and Army. The High Energy Laser Test Facility at White Sands Missile Range is the only national test site for evaluation and testing of these systems.

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